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RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
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RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HAVANA 000256

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DEPT FOR WHA/CCA

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TAGS: [CU](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: LADIES IN WHITE MARK FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF BLACK  
SPRING

Classified By: COM: M.E. Parmly : For reasons 1.4 b/d

11. (U) Summary: The Cuban human rights organization, Ladies in White (Damas de Blanco), marked the fifth anniversary of the 2003 crackdown on dissidents by holding a series of five marches. On March 14, a group of the women marched to the Ministry of Justice and without incident presented a letter demanding the release of the 55 prisoners, arrested in 2003, who remain incarcerated. On March 15, the organization attempted a march on the Ministry of the Interior in Plaza de la Revolucion in Havana. A group of about 20 people shouting insults prevented the marchers from approaching the building. On March 16, 55 women joined the organization's weekly attendance at mass in the church of Saint Rita. On March 18 the group held a presentation of the book, "Buried Alive" by political prisoner, Hector Maseda Gutierrez at the home of Maseda's wife, Laura Pollan. Marches were also held on March 19 and March 20. End summary.

12. (U) The organization, Ladies in White (Damas de Blanco) consists of wives and relatives of the 75 pro-democracy activists jailed during a massive human rights crackdown in 12003. 55 of the 75 remain in prison. The others either served out their sentences or were granted early release for health reasons. On March 14 about 30 members of Ladies in White marched to the Ministry of Justice and handed without incident a letter to the Ministry officials demanding the release of political prisoners.

13. (U) On March 15 a group of about 30 women from the organization attempted to march to the office of the Ministry of the Interior located in the Plaza de la Revolucion in Havana with the intention of delivering a letter demanding the unconditional release of political prisoners. About three blocks from the Ministry about 20 people in civilian clothes blocked the street and hurled insults at the marches. The Ladies in White desisted in their efforts to reach the Ministry. No violence was reported.

14. (U) On March 16, 55 women participated the organization's weekly activity of attending mass at Saint Rita's church in Havana. This is a far larger than normal turnout. The group expressed disappointment that the international press did not

cover the activity.

15. (U) On March 18, Ladies in White held a presentation of the book "Buried Alive" by Hector Maseda Gutierrez, one of the group of the 75 arrested in 2003 who remains in prison. The presentation was held in the home of Maseda's wife Laura Pollan, who serves as the spokesperson for Ladies in White. Pollan surreptitiously brought the book out of the prison chapter by chapter. Pollan stated that she was very proud to read at the event letters from President Bush and Spanish President Zapatero, indicating support from different ends of the political spectrum. Leading dissidents, such as Martha Beatriz Roque and Roberto de Miranda, both members of the group of 75, attended the event. The Ladies in White also held marches on March 19 and 20.

16. (U) The Ladies sent out a statement urging governments, religious and international organization and others to analyze whether, despite pronouncements by the Raul Castro government, there has been any change in the level of repression in Cuba since 2003. The letter decreed the GOC held prisoners as hostages and was trying "insult them by presenting them to distinguished foreign representatives as possible objects of exchange". Economist Oscar Espinosa Chepe, who is a member of the 75 out on release, put out a statement reminding people that several of those who remain in jail did nothing more than accurately expose problems in the Cuban economy and society that even Raul Castro now acknowledges in speeches.

17. (C) While she was in Havana for these activities, Magalis Broche from Villa Clara, wife of Libardo Linares Garcia in prison in Cienfuegos, spoke to Pol off about the situation of her husband. He is one of the most ill of the 55 who remain in prison. She said that he was offered to go

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to Spain on the recent prison release and refused it completely. Broche related that he said that he will not accept any release unless he is allowed to fight for democracy in Cuba.

PARMLY